

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 IO-14 ACDA-19 SCI-06 NAS-01 TRSE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07

PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 DPW-01 EUR-25

DRC-01 /156 W

----- 025562

R 201115Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SAIGON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2884

UNCLAS SECTION I OF 2 SAIGON 3679

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: MASS, VS

SUBJECT: LETTER FROM ACCURACY IN MEDIA, INC.

REF: SAIGON 2978

1. OUT OF THE CLEAR BLUE THERE ARRIVED ON MY DESK LETTER FROM MR. REED J. IRVINE, PRESIDENT OF ACCURACY IN MEDIA, AN ORGANIZATION OF WHICH I HAVE HEARD BUT WITH WHICH I HAVE HAD NO CONTACT. IT IS INTERESTING TO NOTE HIS COMMENTS ON THE SHIPPLER SOTY WERE MADE WITH NO KNOWLEDGE OF THE SUBSTANCE OF THE EMBASSY'S DETAILED COMMENTS OTHER THAN THOSE WHICH APPEARED IN THE POST AND TIMES STORIES. APPARENTLY, IF ONE DARES TO OBSERVE "LOOK, MAMA, THE KING IS NAKED" THERE WILL BE A FEW OTHERS HONEST ENOUGH TO OBSERVE THAT AFTER ALL THE LAD WAS RIGHT.

2. I HAVE BEEN INFORMED THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF AN AP STORY THAT THE DEPARTMENT IS MAINTAINING STRICT NEUTRALITY IN MY ENDEAVORS TO ASSURE THE AMERICAN CONGRESS AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE ARE TOLD THE WHOLE TRUTH ABOUT THE CURRENT REALITIES IN VIET-NAM. CONSEQUENTLY, IT IS NOT EXPECTED THAT THIS CABLE WILL BE LEAKED AS QUICKLY AS REFTTEL, IF AT ALL. PERHAPS, HOWEVER, THE TEXT OF MR. IRVINE'S LETTER COULD BE MADE AVAILABLE TO SOME UNCLASSIFIED

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MEMBER OF THE CONGRESS WHO MIGHT THINK A WIDER CIRCULATION WOULD SERVE THE PUBLIC INTEREST.

3. TEXT OF LETTER FOLLOWS:

BEGIN TEXT:

MR. ARTHUR OCHS SULZBERGER
PRESIDENT AND PUBLISHER
THE NEW YORK TIMES
TIMES SQUARE
NEW YORK, N.Y. 10036
DEAR MR. SULZBERGER:

IN HIS FINE LITTLE BOOKLET, HOW TO GET MORE OUT OF
YOUR NEWSPAPER, THEODORE M. BERNSTEIN OF THE NEW YORK TIMES
WROTE:

THE CONSCIENTIOUS NEWSPAPER AND ITS WRITERS NEVER
EXPRESS OPINIONS IN REPORTING THE NEWS... THE NEWSPAPER NEVER
ARGUES A CASE IN THE NEWS COLUMNS... AND THE NEWS COLUMNS,
OF COURSE, NEVER ADVOCATE ANYTHING.

A LITTLE FURTHER ON, MR. BERNSTEIN SAYS:

THE NEWS COLUMNS PURVEY INFORMATION, NOT PROPAGANDA.
AND SUPPRESSING INFORMATION ABOUT AN UNPLEASANT SUBJECT
CONSTITUTES PROPAGANDIZING JUST AS MUCH AS DO EXAGGERATION
AND DISTORTION. AS A MATTER OF FACT, READERS WOULD BE ILL
SERVED IF THEIR NEWSPAPER DID NOT GIVE THEM FULL INFORMATION
ABOUT A POTENTIAL ENEMY--INFORMATION THAT MIGHT ALERT THEM TO
THE NATURE OF THE THREAT AND PERMIT THEM TO APPRAISE IT.
LATER BERNSTEIN NOTES THAT THE BASIS THEORY OF AMERICAN
JOURNALISM IS THAT FACTS MUST BE KEPT RIGIDLY SEPARATED FROM
OPINION. HE SAYS:

MIXING FACTS AND OPINION IS LIKE PUTTING GROUND GLASS IN
SUGAR; ONCE YOU DO IT, YOU CANNOT SEPARATE THEM, AND YOU
HAVE A HIGHLY DANGEROUS CONCOCTION ON YOUR HANDS. THE RESULT
IS BOUND TO BE AN INABILITY OF THE READER TO DETERMINE
WHICH IS FACT AND WHICH IS OPINION AND A PERVERTED PRESS
DEVOTED TO PROPAGANDIZING FOR CAUSES.

I DO NOT KNOW WHETHER MR. BERNSTEIN IS WITH THE TIMES ANY
LONGER. IF NOT, IT SEEMS THAT HIS PRINCIPLES HAVE ALSO
DEPARTED WITH HIM. I WROTE TO YOU TEN DAYS AGO ABOUT THE
SERIOUSLY DISTORTED ACCOUNT THAT THE TIMES CARRIED OF THE
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REPORT OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES ON THE IMPACT OF
HERBICIDE USE IN SOUTH VIET-NAM. I ANTICIPATED THAT THIS
WELL-DOCUMENTED CRITICISM WOULD BRING FORTH IMMEDIATE RESULTS
AND A CORRECTION IN THE TIMES. IT IS DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING TO
NOTE THAT THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE. SURELY SUPPRESSING
THE TRUE FACTS ABOUT THE HERBICIDE REPORT ADDS UP TO A FORM
OF PROPAGANDIZING, AS BERNSTEIN POINTED OUT. WILL YOU NOT
INSIST THAT A PROMPT CORRECTION BE MADE?

I THOUGHT OF BERNSTEIN AGAIN WHEN I READ AMBASSADOR
GRAHAM MARTIN'S CRITICISM OF DAVID SHIPLER'S ARTICLE ON
VIET-NAM IN THE TIMES OF FEBRUARY 25, 1974. I HAVE NOT YET HAD
THE ADVANTAGE OF SEEING AMBASSADOR MARTIN'S DETAILED CRITIQUE,

BUT I HAVE LOOKED AT MR. SHIPLER'S ARTICLE TO SEE HOW WELL IT CONFORMS WITH BERNSTEIN'S DESCRIPTION OF HOW A CONSCIENTIOUS NEWSPAPER AND ITS WRITERS BEHAVE.

THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES ONE'S ATTENTION IS THAT IN THIS LENGTHY ARTICLE ON VIOLATIONS OF THE PARIS ACCORDS, THERE IS ALMOST NOTHING AT ALL SAID ABOUT VIOLATIONS OF THE ACCORDS BY THE COMMUNISTS. ONE SHORT PARAGRAPH DISPOSES OF THIS SUBJECT, PORTRAYING COMMUNIST VIOLATIONS MERELY AS SOMETHING U.S. INTELLIGENCE OFFICIALS "CONTEND" OCCUR. STRANGELY, MR. SHIPLER DISCUSSED U.S. VIOLATIONS WITH THE INTERNATIONAL CONTROL COMMISSION, BUT HE SAYS NOTHING WHATSOEVER ABOUT THEIR VIEWS ON VIOLATIONS BY THE COMMUNISTS. HE ALSO QUOTES AMBASSADOR ELBRIDGE DUSBROW AS SAYING THAT AMERICAN OFFICIALS WERE NOT TRYING TO KEEP THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE FROM VIOLATING THE CEASE FIRE. AMBASSADOR DUSBROW INFORMS ME THAT THIS WAS STATED IN THE CONTEXT OF POINTING OUT THAT THE OTHER SIDE WAS CONSTANTLY VIOLATING THE CEASE FIRE AND THAT IT WOULD BE FOLLY FOR THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE TO HONOR THE AGREEMENTS UNILATERALLY UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES PREVAILING. MR. SHIPLER IGNORED THAT POINT.

UNCLASSIFIED

<< END OF DOCUMENT >>

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 11 JUN 1999
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: n/a
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 20 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: n/a
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: n/a
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment:
Disposition Date: 01 JAN 1960
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974AIGON00002
Document Source: ADS
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: n/a
Film Number: n/a
From: SAIGON
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740381/abbryzfw.tel
Line Count: 131
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE
Office: n/a
Original Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: n/a
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: SAIGON 2978
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: shawdg
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 09 AUG 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <09-Aug-2002 by elbezejf>; APPROVED <10 DEC 2002 by shawdg>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: LETTER FROM ACCURACY IN MEDIA, INC.
TAGS: MASS, VS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005